

**SOUTHERN GATEWAY  
PLANNING AREA**

## SOUTHERN GATEWAY Planning Area

### PLANNING AREA PROFILE:

#### Location

The Southern Gateway Planning Area is located in the southeastern portion of the Town of Smithfield. It is bounded on the north by the Route 10 Bypass and the Waterford Oaks planned development, on the west by Cypress Creek and the adjacent marsh, on the south by Smithfield High School and the Town's corporate boundary and on the east by Jones Creek and the Town's corporate boundary. The Planning Area, so named because of its location at the confluence of State Route 10/U.S. Route 258, the Route 10 Bypass and South Church Street, which forms the primary gateway welcoming travelers from points southward to the Town of Smithfield, consists of approximately 609 total acres.

#### Existing Land Use and Transportation System

The Southern Gateway Planning Area is a relatively undeveloped area which includes a mix of scattered single family residences, corridor-based commercial uses and farmland bordered by an expanse of fallow land. Its most notable existing uses are the Smithfield Plaza Shopping Center, an existing horse stable and two large borrow pits, one active and one which is no longer used. The Planning Area incorporates roughly half of the Southern Annexation Area, one of three Isle of Wight County territories annexed by the Town of Smithfield on January 1, 1998. The vast majority of this land is vacant and maintained as woodlands, wetlands and open fields, supporting significant agricultural activities.

The State Route 10/U.S. Route 258 corridor provides the principle source of vehicular access within the Planning Area. The only other state maintained roads of any significance in the Planning Area are Cypress Crossing and Cypress Run Drive, two undivided and unmarked roads serving the horse stables, several residences and the borrow pits in the western half of the Planning Area. No major public transportation improvements are currently planned for the Area; however, in order to support the development planned for the Southern Gateway Planning Area, additional road improvements will be necessary to access the interior parcels from State Route 10/U.S. Route 258.

#### Existing Environmental Considerations

The Planning Area's development potential is constrained somewhat by the presence of two significant creeks, Cypress Creek and Jones Creek, located along its western and eastern boundaries, respectively. The scenic marshlands and surface tributaries of these waterways surround and penetrate the Planning Area to create barriers to construction for a significant portion of the land. Slightly over twenty percent of the total Planning Area, approximately 125 acres, have topographic and wetland characteristics which make them unsuitable for urban development. While these tidal waterways limit the total buildable area, they provide dramatic siting opportunities from the adjacent ridges. Of the Planning Area's 609 total acres, approximately 389 (64%) have been identified as having prime development potential. Additional undeveloped conservation areas totaling approximately 66 acres have purposely not been included in Sub-Area designation as there are no current plans for the future development of this land. It is projected that these lands identified for conservation will be faced with little development pressure in the near

planning term as other, more accessible undeveloped parcels in Town with direct access to public water and sewer service will likely be targeted for development well before these lands are considered. Thus, for immediate planning purposes, these lands have been designated on the Town's Future Land Use Map as Community Conservation lands for which existing uses should be maintained and protected from dense development until market considerations warrant a revised analysis of their particular highest and best uses.

### **SOUTHERN GATEWAY LAND USE PLAN**

The Southern Gateway Planning Area is planned as a mixed-use community incorporating a range of single family residential housing along with retail commercial and motel lodging uses along its principal corridor. These commercial uses are designed to augment the Town's existing commercial base and to support its ongoing effort to increase regional tourism within the community. The future development of the Planning Area should occur under the guidance of a master plan for each Planning Sub-Area, as opposed to the parcel-by-parcel approach that has historically dominated Town development along its major corridors. By creating a long range plan, the owners of the various properties would be able to produce a better product that would identify the highest and best use of each property and allow a design strategy that would appropriately respond to the existing, stable uses found in the Planning Area. A thoughtful master planning effort in this Planning Area would also allow the Town to better prepare its efforts to provide the necessary public services to support future development in the area. No intensive development should take place in the vast amount of vacant land in this Planning Area until existing water and sewer distribution systems extended to adequately serve the planned uses.

In the following sections, specific land use recommendations are presented for each of the five Sub-Areas identified in the Southern Gateway Planning Area.

#### **Sub-Area 1 Recommendations**

Sub-Area 1 is located in the northwestern portion of the Southern Gateway Planning Area. It is bounded on the north and east by the Route 10 Bypass, on the west by Cypress Creek and on the south by a single family residence, a borrow pit and Sub-Area 4. Encompassing approximately 55 acres, Sub-Area 1 is planned for community conservation which is intended to preserve existing natural features and vegetation, promote interim agricultural and forestry activities and production and encourage the conservation and maintenance of sensitive environmental areas in the Sub-Area. This land use designation would allow single family detached residential development at a density of no more than one dwelling unit per acre. At this density, as many as 33 new housing units could potentially be located within the Sub-Area's approximately 33 net developable acres.

The major issues involved with the potential development of this Sub-Area are (1) the appropriate density of future development, (2) the availability of public utilities, (3) buffering of adjacent existing uses and (4) sensitive environmental areas. Although the future land use designation for the Sub-Area promotes a density range that would support up to one residential unit per acre, the existing zoning (C-C, Community

Conservation) of the properties located within the Sub-Area provides that new residential subdivisions shall only be permitted in the district via special permit and that each subdivision shall not exceed five lots. Thus, any future subdivisions proposed for residential purposes must be individually rezoned to a residential zoning district compatible with the Comprehensive Plan and pursuant to the provisions of the Zoning Ordinance.

Before any rezoning of this nature would be approved by the Town, adequate public water and sewer service would have to be provided for all planned uses. Currently, public water service is provided along Cypress Crossing along an 8-inch water line, while a 30-inch force main maintained by the Hampton Roads Sanitation District (HRSD) provides sanitary sewer service in the area. Future development in the Sub-Area will be capably served by simply extending the existing 8" water line to serve residences; however, the extension of sanitary sewer service could be more costly given the distance to the Bypass and the fees involved with tapping into the HRSD line and constructing extensions. An alternative to the HRSD line would be to run a sanitary line via Cypress Crossing from the existing 12-inch Town force main that runs along the State Route 10/U.S. Route 258 corridor. Regardless of the alternative chosen, the future developer(s) will be responsible for extending the necessary public utilities to serve the area as no lots shall be permitted with private domestic well and septic utilities except by special permit for temporary service.

A thoughtful master plan should be created for the Sub-Area which provides for home siting and internal roadways within the areas which are most conducive for urban land uses, while the fragile environmental areas along the Sub-Area's western boundary are to be maintained as permanent open space. Any urban use of these "sensitive environmental areas" (situated outside the Sub-Area) should be avoided. The siting of new homes should be gently placed within the angular terrain, employing minimal earthwork and extensive landscaping in order to buffer the homes from the nearby borrow pits and the Route 10 Bypass. The proposed master plan should also protect as many existing trees as physically possible within the future development plan, as the Sub-Area is dominated by mature forest. A master plan approach is critical to insuring that each of these issues are appropriately responded to in the efficient and environmentally sensitive development of this site.

#### **Sub-Area 2, 4 and 5 Recommendations**

Sub-Area 2 covers approximately 14 acres and is located in the northern portion of the Southern Gateway Planning Area. It is bounded on the north and east by the Route 10 Bypass, on the west by Sub-Area 1 and on the south by Cypress Crossing. The Sub-Area is currently home to horse stables and is planned for corporate office and research use at a floor area ratio of 0.30 to 0.50 square feet per net developable acre. At this proposed density, Sub-Area 2's 11.6 net developable acres could support between approximately 151,589 and 252,648 square feet of additional corporate office and research space. Hospitality and restaurant uses are also encouraged within the Sub-Area as supporting land uses.

Sub-Area 4 is located in the southwestern portion of the Southern Gateway Planning Area. It is bounded on the north by Cypress Run Drive and the Smithfield Plaza Shopping Center, on the west by marshland bordering Cypress Creek, on the south by the Town's corporate limits and Smithfield High School and on

the east by State Route 10/U.S. Route 258. Sub-Area 4 currently is home to an existing residence and an industrial use, while the balance of the undeveloped portion of the property is actively farmed. The 183.2 acre Sub-Area is planned for corporate office and research use at 0.30 to 0.50 square feet per net developable acre. At this density, between 2,034,688 and 3,391,146 square feet of corporate office and research space (including supporting uses such as lodging facilities and restaurants) could be located within the Sub-Area's 155.7 net developable acres.

Sub-Area 5 is located in the eastern portion of the Southern Gateway Planning Area. It is bounded on the north by the residential portion of the Waterford Oaks development, on the west by State Route 10/U.S. Route 258, on the south by a tributary of Jones Creek and on the east by the marsh adjacent to Jones Creek. The entire Sub-Area is undeveloped, and much of the land is actively farmed. The 134 acre Sub-Area is planned for corporate office and research use at 0.30 to 0.50 square feet per net developable acre. At this density, between 1,492,366 and 2,487,276 square feet of corporate office and research space (including supporting uses such as lodging facilities and restaurants) could be located within the Sub-Area's 114.2 net developable acres.

The major issues involved with the potential development of these Sub-Areas are (1) vehicular access, (2) provision of public utilities, (3) sensitive environmental areas and (4) buffering from adjacent uses. While establishing vehicular access from State Route 10/U.S. Route 258 will be an important consideration for all three of these Sub-Areas, it will play a critical role in the determination of the future development potential of Sub-Area 2. Sub-Areas 4 and 5 both directly front the State Route 10/U.S. Route 258 corridor and enjoy excellent visibility and easy access to this major entrance corridor, while Sub-Area 2 fronts the Route 10 Bypass, a limited access roadway that affords high visibility to a high volume of regional commuters but prohibits a direct outlet into the property. At present, Cypress Crossing provides the only direct vehicular access to Sub-Area 2, and in its present form, it is unsuitable to support the traffic demands typically associated with the uses recommended for the property. Therefore, any future development of Sub-Area 2 for substantial corporate office and research development would necessitate the improvement of Cypress Crossing into a road capable of supporting future traffic demands imposed by the future user(s).

Sub-Area 4 may be accessed via the existing Cypress Run Drive; however, this road will require a significant upgrade from its present state in order to adequately serve the density of uses planned for the property. Furthermore, a well-planned internal street system must be designed in order to access the individual office complexes and supporting uses planned within the office park. Sub-Area 5 should incorporate a master-planned internal street system incorporating a single, shared entrance off State Route 10/U.S. Route 258, similar to the street system design incorporated into the adjacent Waterford Oaks project.

A master plan should be created for each of these three Sub-Areas in order to ensure the efficient allocation of planned uses and road infrastructure within each development. The master plan should respond to the new corridor design guidelines currently under development by the Town with respect to set backs, landscaping and parking standards for the future development in each Sub-Area. The master

plans guiding the future development of Sub-Areas 4 and 5 should also incorporate the sidewalk improvements recommended for both sides of the road on Route 10 Bypass and the State Route 10/U.S. Route 258 corridor as part of the Town's new Sidewalk Plan (see the Transportation Plan provided in Chapter X for a more detailed summary of the Plan).

The provision of public utilities to the planned development will be another important consideration in the planning of each Sub-Area. Each of the three Sub-Areas could easily obtain water service via an extension from the existing 8-inch line that currently runs from State Route 10/U.S. Route 258 to the Smithfield Plaza Shopping Center. Sanitary sewer service is provided in the Planning Area via a thirty-inch HRSD force main that runs along this major entrance corridor. Future development in each of the three Sub-Areas would need to tap into this HRSD line in order to extend a serviceable line to planned residences. Subdivisions in these Sub-Areas would need to obtain an easement for the line extension from adjacent properties. The future developer of Sub-Area 5 will also have to obtain an easement to extend a water line extension from the existing 8-inch line that runs along Route 10/258 to serve planned uses. The costs involved with obtaining these easements and constructing the necessary utility line extensions dictate that these Sub-Areas will most likely not be developed in the near planning term as other better located, vacant residentially-zoned lands are absorbed first by market demand. Thus, it is anticipated that these Sub-Areas will not be developed for several years. Regardless, none of the three Sub-Areas should be developed until the necessary public utility improvements are put in place.

Each of these three Sub-Areas are impacted by the presence of sensitive environmental areas. The development potential of Sub-Area 5 is particularly constrained by the presence of a tributary of Jones Creek which bisects the property. While this tributary and its adjacent marsh limits the development potential of the Sub-Area, it provides dramatic siting opportunities overlooking the waterway. Similar opportunities are available overlooking Cypress Creek in the western portion of Sub-Area 4. The final development plan for both of these Sub-Areas must ensure that future office park buildings and supporting infrastructure pieces are sited sufficiently away from these environmentally sensitive areas in order to minimize their impact on these valuable resources while still maximizing the valuable views. Future development in each Sub-Area should also be well buffered from adjacent planned commercial uses with appropriate landscaping as is provided for in the revised Town Zoning Ordinance.

Another important consideration for the future development of these Sub-Areas is the future stability of adjacent uses. Each development should incorporate sufficient landscaping and setbacks to create an appropriate buffer to minimize the impact of the future uses on adjacent uses, as well as to separate the office areas from the nearby borrow pits.

### **Sub-Area 3 Recommendations**

Sub-Area 3 is located in the northern portion of the Southern Gateway Planning Area. It is bounded on the north by Cypress Crossing, on the east by State Route 10/U.S. Route 258, on the west by an active borrow pit and on the south by the Smithfield Shopping Center. This Sub-Area covers only slightly over 2 acres and is planned for an expansion of the adjacent retail commercial uses at a floor area ratio of 0.20

to 0.50 square feet per net developable acre per acre. At this proposed density, Sub-Area 3's 2.1 net developable acres could support between approximately 18,295 and 45,738 square feet of additional commercial retail space.

The major issues involved with the potential development of this Sub-Area are (1) vehicular access and (2) the implementation of the Town's new corridor design guidelines. A master plan should be created for the Sub-Area in order to ensure the efficient allocation of planned retail uses and road infrastructure within the planned development, as well as to provide the necessary access for these uses from State Route 10/U.S. Route 258. The recommended master plan guiding future development in the Sub-Area should incorporate two separate, consolidated entrances into the new infill retail area: one each off Route 10/258 and Cypress Crossing. These consolidated entrances will allow the necessary access into the infill retail area without adding to the proliferation of curb cuts that already exists along this important entrance corridor. The master plan should also respond to the new corridor design guidelines currently under development by the Town with respect to set backs, landscaping and parking standards for the future development in the Sub-Area. It should also include a siting plan that would allow the future retail user to maximize exposure to the Route 10 Bypass while still meeting the requirements of the corridor design guidelines and providing appropriate landscaping, parking and pedestrian access from its entrance off Cypress Crossing. The sidewalk improvements recommended for both sides of the road on Route 10 Bypass and the State Route 10/U.S. Route 258 corridor as part of the Town's new Sidewalk Plan (see the Transportation Plan provided in Chapter XI for a more detailed summary of the Plan) should also be incorporated into the master plan.

### **FUTURE LAND USE SUMMARY**

The Comprehensive Plan projects the Southern Gateway Planning Area as an integrated, mixed-use community which will provide several opportunities for the Town to meet its economic development objectives with respect to research and office park development, retail commercial development and tourism support. The plan for this area also provides a suitable transition from its mix of highway-related commercial uses along State Route 10/U.S. Route 258 to the rural, undeveloped lands adjacent to Smithfield High School and beyond in Isle of Wight County. The Town should focus its efforts in this Planning Area on the marketing of Sub-Areas 2, 4 and 5 as suitable properties for future research and office park and lodging development. Future end users that would generate new professional job opportunities, expand upon the existing lodging infrastructure, enhance the Town's position in the regional retail marketplace, respect the Town's new corridor design guidelines and fit as an appropriate use within the area's role as a visual gateway should be actively targeted and solicited as part of the Town's new more proactive economic development function.

According to the adopted Future Land Use Plan, the Southern Gateway Planning Area holds the potential to accommodate approximately 33 new households. It also has the potential to provide between approximately 18,295 and 45,738 square feet of new retail commercial space and between approximately 3,678,642 and 6,131,070 square feet of corporate office and research space. The development of this Planning Area should provide increased employment opportunities in the professional and service

sectors, the additional commercial lodging space needed to support the anticipated increased convention and tourism activity in the Town and significant sales tax revenues for the Town. However, the active use of these properties may not occur for many years as there are no pending development plans for the Area. In the interim, the Town should encourage the creation of a master plan for the various Sub- Areas designated above which respects the natural environment and efficiently provides suitable building sites to meet Town planning objectives. No development should take place until the required and extensive utility improvements are completed.

The table on the following page summarizes the development potential of each of the Sub-Areas as recognized in the Plan.

**FUTURE LAND USE PLAN  
SOUTHERN GATEWAY PLANNING AREA**

Sub-Area	Sub-Area Acreage	Net Developable Acreage	Recommended Use	Density	Yield	
1	55.3	32.6	Community Conservation	1	33 - 33	du
2	13.6	11.6	Corporate Office & Research	0.30-0.50	151,589 - 252,648	sf
3	2.3	2.1	Retail Commercial	0.20-0.50	18,295 - 45,738	sf
4	183.2	155.7	Corporate Office & Research	0.30-0.50	2,034,688 - 3,391,146	sf
5	134.4	114.2	Corporate Office & Research	0.30-0.50	1,492,366 - 2,487,276	sf
<b>Sub-Area Total</b>	<b>388.8</b>	<b>316.2</b>	<b>Estimated Totals:</b> Community Conservation Retail Commercial Corporate Office & Research		33 - 33 18,295 - 45,738 3,678,642 - 6,131,070	du du sf
<b>Sensitive Environmental Areas</b>	124.6					
<b>Existing Urban Development</b>	43.4					
<b>Undeveloped Conservation Areas (Not Incl. in Sub-Areas)</b>	65.8					
<b>Planning Area Total</b>	<b>609.0</b>	<b>316.2</b>				